

To Whom Shall We Go?

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Some Plain Questions and Answers
About the True Religion

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Preface

To whom shall we go ¹ for religious truth, for religious certainty? This question cannot but force itself upon the mind of many an earnest Christian, whose soul is hungry for the bread of life-giving truth, but who knows not where to find it. Where is the voice of Him to be heard Who has the words of eternal life? So many there are on every side who say: "Lo, here is Christ, or there"; and honest souls are at a loss whither they shall go.

The following humble pages have been written with a view of supplying an answer to this momentous question, and of pointing out that Church which alone is the Mystical Body of Christ wherein He abides and through which He speaks.

May these few lines shed a ray of light into some doubting minds, so that by further inquiry they may be led to find the truth, and through God's mercy be vouchsafed the priceless treasure of divine faith!

¹ John vi. 69.

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Some Plain Questions and Answers about the True Religion

Q. What must we do to be saved?

A. We must *believe* all that Christ has taught and *observe* what He has commanded.

Q. Is not "faith alone" sufficient to save us?

A. No; we must not only believe God's teachings, but also do God's will by keeping the Commandments.

Q. Cannot we be saved by simply being good and honest, without concerning ourselves about faith or creed?

A. No; it is our strictest duty to accept what God has told us. To disbelieve God's teachings is a great sin.

Q. Is it not sufficient to believe in

Christ as our Savior, or must we necessarily believe every article of the Christian religion?

A. We must not only believe in Christ, but we must believe all that He has taught us. We are not at liberty to deny even one article of His doctrine. "Go and teach all nations, . . . teaching them to observe *all things* whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). Therefore, we must, in obedience to Christ, accept His *whole* doctrine and *all* His Commandments.

Q. Can we "know with certainty" what Christ has commanded us to believe and to observe?

A. Yes; having commanded all to accept His teachings, and having even said: "He who believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi. 16), He must have left a *sure* means by which *all* men can know his doctrine.

Q. What is this means, or how can we know with certainty what we must believe?

A. The means of knowing this is the teaching of the Church instituted by Jesus Christ.

Q. Is not "the Bible" the sufficient source and rule of faith?

A. No; *the Bible alone* is altogether insufficient, for different reasons.

Q. Can everyone read the Bible?

A. No; the Bible is a sealed book to many uneducated people. And before the art of printing was invented Bibles were so scarce and so enormous in price that they were within the reach of only a few. If Christ had intended the Bible as the only rule of faith for all, He would certainly have made it accessible to all.

Q. How can you know that your Bible is truly the Holy Scripture?

A. He who admits no other authority but the Bible alone, cannot have any except human reasons for believing that the Bible is really the inspired word of God, and that his English Bible is the whole and uncorrupted Scripture and nothing else. St. Augustine, in the fourth century, says: "I would not believe the Gospel, if *the Church* did not tell me to believe."

Q. Suppose that you could be absolutely certain that your Bible is the genuine word of God: could you ever

be sure that you understand its right meaning?

A. No; I could not. Many things in the Bible are hard to understand (2 Peter iii. 16), and even some of the plainest passages are interpreted by many in different ways. And the Bible itself, being a silent book, cannot decide the dispute or settle the doubt, and so you may *think* that you are right in your opinion, but I have as much right to think that I am right in mine; and pray, having nothing but the Bible alone, who is to be the final judge? And how can we with certainty know what to hold?

Q. Is all this proven by facts?

A. Yes. As soon as Luther had rejected the authority of the Church, and proclaimed the novel doctrine that everyone had to make up his own creed from the Bible, the dissensions began for good. Zwingli, Calvin, and many others differed altogether from Luther, and from each other. Many *different* creeds were gotten up out of the *same Bible*, and today hundreds of different sects exist with different beliefs, which they all claim to draw from the same Bible.

Q. Do these numerous Christian sects not agree at least on the main tenets of Christianity?

A. No, they do not. Take any article of the Christian faith, and you will find some of the Christian sects who deny it—even the divinity of Christ. What some hold to be absolutely necessary for salvation is rejected by others—all having the same Bible. And who shall decide between them? With the Bible alone Christianity becomes an utter failure; there can be no firm, undoubting divine faith; there is room only for private human opinions, which may be right or wrong, and this in matters concerning eternal salvation. It ends in religious doubt.

Just as the Constitution of the United States alone, without courts to decide its meaning and without a government to enforce its observance, would be a dead letter, so the Bible alone would be without the living authority of the Church.

Q. As a matter of fact, was the Christian religion established and maintained in the world through the Bible?

A. No; Christianity was established by

the preaching of the Apostles, their co-laborers and successors, who were commissioned hereto by Christ: "Go and teach all nations, . . . and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20); and the Christian faith was maintained in its purity by the teaching authority of the Church, who was the guardian, interpreter, and judge of the true faith. At all times, as history tells us, the faith of Christians rested on this teaching of the Church, and disputes or doubts about matters of faith were settled by the authority of the Church.

Q. Did the first Christians even have the Bible as we have it today?

A. No; some parts of the New Testament were written many years after Christianity had been established in many places; and even after that these various books and epistles, which constitute the New Testament, were not collected into one book; and there being many false gospels and kindred uninspired writings, the Christians knew not which of them were inspired and which were not. It was only at the end of the fourth century, by the

Third Council of Carthage, that the genuine Canon of the Bible was fixed. Then, after Christianity had existed for three hundred years, the authority of the Church defined which writings were the inspired Holy Scripture.

Q. Does the Catholic Church hold that the Bible is the Word of God?

A. Yes; and it is from her that the Protestants received the Bible, and through her we know that these writings are the Word of God.

Q. Do not Catholics believe their Church rather than the Bible?

A. Catholics are told by the Church that the Bible is God's own word, which must be true and must be held in the highest esteem; but they are also told by the Bible itself "to hear the Church." They know that the Church has been made by Christ the authoritative interpreter of the Bible and the Judge in matters of faith. Therefore Catholics follow not their own interpretation of the Bible, but the one given by the judgment of the Church.

Q. Which are, therefore, the main

reasons why the Bible alone is not sufficient to teach us our religion?

A. 1st. You cannot know that your Bible is God's word.

2nd. It was not completed from the beginning of Christianity, and it was only after three hundred years that the Book in its present form was declared and known to be the Bible.

3rd. Because so many people cannot read it; so few can understand it; and especially in former ages so few could even have it.

4th. Because, as experience proves, its meaning is understood differently, even on the most important points. So that with the same Bible there are numberless different creeds.

The most important Christian truths are thrown overboard one after the other, even the Godhead of the Savior, and some even begin to deny the divine inspiration of the Bible itself. A sincere inquirer after the truth, who has no guide but the Bible alone, can never find certainty, because he is never assured that his understanding of the Scripture is the right one, whilst he sees that so many people and churches entirely disagree from it.

Therefore divine faith, absolute religious certainty, is impossible with the Bible alone. We must, therefore, have another teacher, which is the Church.

Q. Does Holy Scripture tell us about that teaching body called the Church?

A. Yes, in many places. Christ said to His Apostles: "Go and teach all nations: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). Thus Christ sends a body of men to teach His religion to mankind till the end of time. What else is this but the teaching Church? He commands all "to hear the Church" (Matt. xviii. 17). To Peter, whom He made the chief pastor of His Church, He said: "Thou art Peter: and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). St. Paul (1 Tim. iii. 15) calls the Church "the pillar and ground of the truth."

Therefore one cannot claim to believe the Bible and not believe in a Church, founded by Christ to teach His doctrine till the end of time.

Q. Did Christ institute "only one" Church?

A. Yes, only one. He speaks of His Church, not churches; and He compares it to one fold under one shepherd. His ardent wish and the object of His last prayer was that those who were to believe in Him should be one (John xvii. 21).

Q. Could different churches with different creeds possibly be true churches of Christ at the same time?

A. No: this would be absurd; truth is one, and its denial or contradiction must be untrue and false. If one Church teaches Christ's true doctrine, then any other churches holding a different belief are not true churches of Christ.

Q. But which is that one Church, established by Christ to teach His truth all days till the end of time?

A. It cannot be any other Church except the ancient Mother Church — the holy Catholic Church.

Q. Give some convincing proofs of this assertion.

A. 1st. There is *only one* true Church. The Catholic Church *alone* claims to be

that one Church of Christ. No other church dares to claim to be the *only* true Church.

2nd. As we saw, the Bible alone is not a sufficient teacher of religion; the Bible itself gives the clearest evidence of a teaching Church founded by Christ. Now, only the Catholic Church claims to be a teaching Church; she is and always has been teaching mankind with divine authority. All the other churches say that the Bible is the only source and rule of faith, not claiming any teaching authority for themselves.

3rd. The only Church that existed "all days," since Christ left the earth, is the Catholic Church; the oldest among the other churches dating back only about four hundred years. Therefore, she is the only Church that *can* have been founded by Christ and His Apostles.

4th. Christ founded His Church for all men. The Catholic Church is the only one that is *universal*; she existed *always*, and she is to be found *everywhere*. She is not national, English, German, Russian, or American, but she is *catholic*. She is of all nations and countries, and the preponderating mass

of Christians belong to her communion. All the numerous Protestant churches combined do not number half as many members as the Catholic Church alone.

5th. St. Peter certainly was made chief pastor of the Church by Christ Himself: "Thou art Peter: upon this rock I will build My Church." "To thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xvi. 18, 19). "Feed thou My lambs; feed My sheep" (John xxi. 17).

St. Peter died as Bishop of Rome; his successors in the See of Rome were at all times considered as the chief pastors of the Church. From St. Peter to Pius XI we have an unbroken chain of Roman Pontiffs, whom the Christians at all times acknowledged as the lawful successors of St. Peter and supreme pastors of the universal Church. This is history. Therefore the Catholic Church is *apostolic*; it is the same Church which was founded on Peter and the other Apostles; whereas all the other churches are only of recent date, started by different men—Luther, Calvin, Wesley, etc

Q. Is it certain that the Catholic Church has not become corrupted

since the time of the Apostles, and thus ceased to be true?

A. No; this cannot be, because Christ has promised that He would always be with her, and that the powers of hell would never prevail against her. Therefore it was impossible for His Church to become corrupted or false; otherwise she would have been overcome and Christ's promises would have failed. If in the course of time members of the Church, and even some of her pastors, have been leading unworthy lives, this interferes not with the truth of the Church herself, who has never ceased to teach the true and holy doctrine of Christ.

Q. Is, then, the Church infallible, so that she can never teach anything but the truth?

A. Yes; she is. The Church is the divinely commissioned teacher of Christ's religion. Men are commanded to hear her and to believe her doctrine; but men could never be commanded by Christ to submit to any doctrine that *could* be false; therefore it *must* be always true. And Christ has promised to be with her till the end of time.

Q. Is it a fact that the Catholic Church has been teaching the same unchanged Christian truth for nineteen hundred years?

A. Yes; it is. Her bitterest enemies cannot cite one instance wherein she ever *changed* any of her doctrines. If she would ever have changed her teachings, she would not be the true Church; for truth when changing changes into untruth or falsehood. In the course of time she has defined and proclaimed some articles of faith which had not been defined before, but never did any of these declarations disagree with any of her previous teachings.

Q. Who is invested with this infallible authority in the Catholic Church?

A. A representative assembly or council of bishops, presided over by the Pope, or the Pope alone, who is the head of the Church and the supreme judge in matters of faith.

Q. What is, therefore, the meaning of the infallibility of the Church and of the Pope, as Catholics understand it?

A. It means that a general council of the

bishops of the Catholic Church under the authority of the Pope, or the Pope alone, when speaking in his official capacity as supreme pastor of the Church, cannot err or teach falsehood whenever either proclaims to all the faithful a doctrine of faith or morals.

As we saw, the faithful are in duty bound to accept the teachings of the Church and to submit to the decisions of the lawful authority of the Church. Therefore God must preserve the Church and her chief pastor from falling into error in any of their teachings or decisions concerning religion. This Christ has promised to do by being always with her and by the constant guidance of the Holy Ghost. And to Peter, the first Pope, Christ has said: "I have prayed for *thee* that thy faith fail not: and *thou* being once converted confirm thy brethren" (Luke xxii. 32).

Q. Is it necessary for salvation to belong to the Catholic Church and to believe all her teachings?

A. Because the Catholic Church is that one Church whom Christ established for the salvation of man, whom He commissioned to teach His religion, whom He empowered

to bind and to loose (Matt. xviii. 18), to forgive men's sins (John xx. 23), and to dispense His grace, therefore it is the bounden duty of everyone to belong to that Church, to hear and obey her, to believe her teachings and to partake of her Sacraments. And *unless one be excused by unwillful ignorance*, he commits a great sin, excluding him from salvation, by not submitting to that one true Church of God, who alone is the Mystical Body of Christ (Col. i. 24), the spotless bride of Christ (Apoc. xxi. 9), the true mother of all God's children (Gal. iv. 26).

Q. Does it not seem to be intolerant in the Catholic Church to claim to be the only true Church of Christ, with exclusion of all others?

A. Truth must necessarily be intolerant with regard to error. If we know anything to be true, we cannot admit its opposite as true also. The Catholic Church, knowing herself to be in possession of the truth, cannot admit divergent and opposite creeds as true at the same time.

Q. Does God hate error, and must every reasonable man detest falsehood?

A. Yes; God being the eternal truth, hates and detests falsehood, and every reasonable mind must do the same; and therefore, like God Himself, we must hold to the truth and be intolerant with regard to its opposite, which is untruth.

And in questions of religion the eternal salvation of souls is at stake.

Q. Does this mean that the Catholic Church does or should hate or persecute those who are outside her communion?

A. By no means. She is intolerant only with regard to any false religion, because she cannot countenance falsehood; but not with regard to any *persons*. On the contrary, she commands all her children to extend brotherly love to all without regard to creed. Thus we must distinguish between a false religion and the persons professing that religion. We must love the latter, whereas we cannot love the former.

Q. Is it not intolerant on the part of the Church to forbid her children to go to other churches; to forbid, or allow only reluctantly, marriages with non-Catholics, and only under condi-

tion that all the children of such a marriage shall be brought up Catholics?

Is this not asking too much, and being illiberal and intolerant?

A. No; it is simply being *consistent*. The Catholic Church knowing herself to be the true Church, and the only true Church, must consider every other church or creed as false and wrong. And therefore she cannot allow her children to do anything that would compromise or endanger their faith; she cannot allow any of her members to bring up their children in any other but the one true faith, because in the eyes of the Church it would be bringing them up in falsehood, which is wrong, and she cannot allow anything that she considers to be wrong. She is to watch over the souls of men.

So the Catholic Church is and must be intolerant and uncompromising with regard to the divine treasure of *faith*, but she is broad and liberal in charity. She commands us to love and assist all men; her Sisters of Charity on battlefields and in pest-houses never ask about the faith of the wounded or suffering; but help all. Catholics know

it is a sin to hate or persecute anyone. We must love every person, but we cannot and may not love what we know to be wrong in that person, be it in his conduct or in his belief.

Thus it must appear to everyone that the Catholic Church, knowing herself to be in the sole possession of the whole saving truth of Jesus Christ, must stand firm on the ground of faith, the only faith whereby men must be saved, and that she can never yield on any point where this faith is concerned. If she would do so, she would countenance falsehood; she would become unfaithful to her God-given trust; she would disobey God, and, above all, she would most cruelly endanger the eternal salvation of the souls committed to her care—the souls purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, which Christ commissioned her to teach and to save.

And now, my dear Christian friend, whoever you are, let me say one more word to you about this matter which is of more importance to you than any other thing in this world.

You know that you have been created by God in order that you might know and

love and serve Him in this world and be happy with Him for all eternity in heaven.

You are not ignorant of all that Jesus Christ our divine Savior has done to enable us to attain this end. He has by His own cruel death reopened to us the gates of heaven. He has given His holy religion to mankind in order that men might know the truth of God and all their duties toward Him, and He has established a Church which is to teach that religion to mankind until the end of time, and which received power from Him to forgive men's sins and to dispense His grace. If you have read the Scriptures you must be aware of this. And herefrom it follows that it is your strictest duty and your greatest personal interest to accept the doctrine of Christ as it is found in the Church, and to avail yourself of the means of salvation dispensed by her.

You have too much common sense to say that one religion is as good as another; you must certainly see that *only the true religion* is good.

And it is a question here of your strictest duty to God and of securing your own eternal happiness.

You certainly cannot find security in your faith in your Protestant church; you cannot but see endless dissensions everywhere except in the Catholic Church alone. The Catholics alone have certainty; they alone have that firmness of faith without which there is no faith at all.

If you are an earnest Christian you cannot have found peace and rest in the midst of uncertainty. And, my dear friend, if you knew what unspeakable happiness awaits you in the bosom of that Mother Church, in the sure possession of the whole truth as it is in Jesus, and the enjoyment of all that gives comfort to the human soul in Christ's religion, which has nearly all been rejected by the Protestants!

Very likely you have been told time and again, ever since the days of your childhood, that the Catholic Church is bad, full of corruption and of falsehood. But have you ever examined for yourself, to ascertain whether these charges are true? It is your duty to do so. And if you do, you will find that they are utterly false. Jesus Christ has foretold that His Church would be hated and slandered and persecuted. This has been verified from the beginning

to the present time. And seeing the Catholic Church to be an object of hatred and slanders should convince you the more that she is the true Bride of Christ, sharing the persecutions of the world with her Master.

The Catholic Church is now over nineteen hundred years old; she is the Church of your forefathers; our Catholic faith is the one professed by our ancestors previous to Protestantism for many centuries; it is the faith planted on the soil of England by St. Augustine, in Ireland by St. Patrick, in Germany by St. Boniface; they were Catholic bishops, sent by the Pope of Rome; they preached the selfsame faith which every Catholic believes today; the faith which is held at present by the great majority of Christians. That ancient faith of Christ was *reformed* by men in the sixteenth century, and is being reformed ever since; they introduced *new* creeds, and different ones, protesting against the ancient and universal faith of Christendom. The idea of men reforming the faith and the Church of God is not less absurd than to endeavor to reform the universe, that other work of God, and to change the course of the heavenly bodies.

Christian creeds that are new and divided among themselves are self-condemned.

The Catholic Church, which was already fifteen hundred years old before any Protestant church sprang up, and which until the present day is spread far and wide in every country, numbering more members than all the separated sects combined—that great, venerable Church of our fathers, that Church of the Saints, has a claim at least to your consideration. You should make yourself acquainted with her teachings; perhaps you know her only as she is misrepresented by her enemies, perhaps you never read a Catholic book. This is not fair from your own standpoint. Read a book which explains to you the Catholic religion as it really is. Do not make light of this matter; the eternal happiness of your soul may be at stake. Willful unbelief or disregard of the divine truth would certainly exclude you from salvation. And above all I advise you to pray to God for light to know His truth, and for grace to do His will. Do this in great humility, and with an entire submission of your mind and your will to His holy word. To the humble does God give His grace, but He resists the proud.

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE INTO TRUTH ²

God of all goodness, almighty and eternal, Father of mercies and Savior of mankind! I implore Thee, by Thy sovereign goodness, to enlighten my mind and to touch my heart, that by means of true faith, hope and charity, I may live and die in the true religion of Jesus Christ. I confidently believe that, as there is but one God, there can be but one faith, one religion, one only path to salvation, and that every other path opposed thereto can lead but to perdition. This path, O my God! I anxiously seek after, that I may follow it and be saved. Therefore I protest before Thy divine Majesty, and I swear by all Thy divine attributes, that I will follow the religion which Thou shalt reveal to me to be the true one, and will abandon, at whatever cost, that wherein I shall have discovered errors and falsehood. I confess that I do not deserve this favor for the greatness of my sins, for which I am truly

² This prayer was composed by Mr. Mayer while a Protestant: *Adventures of a Catholic in Search of a Religion.*

penitent, seeing they offend God, Who is so good, so holy, and so worthy of love! But what I deserve not, I hope to obtain from Thine infinite mercy, and I beseech Thee to grant it unto me through the merits of that precious blood which was shed for us sinners by Thine only Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen.

ANOTHER PRAYER

O God, the *Father*, my Creator; O God the *Son*, my Redeemer; O God the *Holy Ghost*, my Sanctifier; Holy Trinity, *one* God, have mercy on me!

O Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Who didst appoint Thy Apostles to act in Thy stead, with power to teach all revealed Truth and to dispense Thy Sacraments, give me light to know Thy one true Church visible here on earth.

Help me, dear Savior, to submit myself humbly to her guidance, and let me not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

Thou, Who didst heal the sick, heal me. Thou, Who didst give sight to the blind, grant that I may see. Let me find in Thy Church pardon and salvation through the merits of Thy most precious blood.

Help me, a poor sinner, to follow after Thee, and to press forward to the full enjoyment of Thee for ever in heaven. Amen.*

* *Catholic Belief.*

Read *The Faith of Our Fathers*, by Cardinal Gibbons; *Catholic Belief*, edited by Father Lambert; Milner's *End of Controversy*; Searle's *Plain Facts for Fair Minds*, or any of the books explaining the Catholic Religion. Or, better still, go to see a priest and study the Catechism.

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